



Letter No. 3638
Friday, October 14, 2011
Creative Media & Broadcast Center
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BROADCASTERS LETTER
#3638
Friday, October 14, 2011

(October 14)

**USDA AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK ANNOUNCES PROPOSED RULES
TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND FOSTER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
FOR TRIBAL COMMUNITIES**

The public is invited to submit comments on the proposed rule which will significantly increase access to USDA's utilities programs and funding opportunities for American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders located in Substantially Underserved Trust Areas (SUTA). "I invite tribal leaders, tribal members, interested citizens and stakeholders to provide their comments and views on this important rule," said Vilsack. "This rule will provide those located in Trust Areas with better access to infrastructure funding to serve tribal communities seeking to build modern utility infrastructure."

To develop the propose rule, USDA Rural Development conducted numerous in-person consultations with tribal leaders and native communities throughout the United States as well as in trust areas in Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. USDA Rural Development also hosted Internet and teleconference-based webinars to solicit further implementation recommendations for the SUTA initiative. Additionally USDA convened several meetings with Federal agencies – the Departments of Interior, Veterans Affairs, Energy, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Communications Commission and the Office of Management and Budget – to determine how best to implement the SUTA provision.

The deadline to make comments on the SUTA proposed rule is on or before December 13, 2011. For more information, please see the October 14, 2011 issue of the [Federal Register](#).

Contacts: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623
For More Story Info: [Latest USDA News Releases](#)
For Radio Story: [ACTUALITY: SUTA Comments Deadline Fast Approaching](#)

USDA INVESTS IN AMERICA'S SPECIALTY CROPS WITH RESEARCH AND EXTENSION ACTIVITIES IN 19 STATES

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan announced 29 grants across 19 states to develop and share science-based tools to address the needs of America's specialty crop industry. USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is awarding the grants, totaling \$46 million, through its Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI).

"Over the last 60 years, agriculture, including horticulture, has become increasingly reliant on science and technology to maintain profitable production," Merrigan said. "Specialty crop producers in the United States—as with all of American agriculture—are seeing sales surge both domestically and abroad as consumers search for high quality, 'Grown in America' fruits, vegetables and tree nuts. These projects will help provide specialty crop producers with the information and tools they need to successfully grow, process and market safe and high quality products, supporting jobs and opportunities for Americans working in specialty crops. From herbs to apples, from walnuts to grapes, specialty crops are central to the richness of American agriculture."

SCRI supports the specialty crop industry by developing and disseminating science-based tools to address the needs of specific crops. Specialty crops are defined in law as "fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture." Funded projects address five focus areas: 1) improve crop characteristics through plant breeding, genetics and genomics; 2) address threats from pests and diseases; 3) improve production efficiency, productivity and profitability; 4) develop new innovations and technologies and 5) develop methods to improve food safety.

SCRI gives priority to projects that are multistate, multi-institutional or trans-disciplinary; and include explicit mechanisms to communicate results to producers and the public. Each of the focus areas received at least 10 percent of the available funds. The majority of funded projects addresses two or more focus areas, and includes many collaborating institutions in addition to the awardee.

The projects funded address research and extension needs for crops that span the entire spectrum of specialty crops production, from researching plant genetics to improving crop characteristics; identifying and addressing threats from pests and diseases; improving production and profitability; developing new production innovations and technologies; and developing methods to respond to food safety hazards.

Projects were funded in Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. Most of the grant recipients are universities and colleges. A full list of awardees can be found online at:

www.nifa.usda.gov/newsroom/news/2011news/scri_awards.html.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202)720-4623

For More Story Info: [Latest USDA News Releases](#)

For Radio Story: [Specialty Crop Grants Given To Organizations For Science Research](#)

(October 13)

USDA SUPPORTS DIVERSE FOOD ACCESS THROUGH FARMERS MARKET PROMOTION PROGRAM GRANTS

Nearly 150 farm-to-consumer marketing projects received funding today under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP), marking a \$9.2 million investment to support direct marketing and to increase consumer access to healthy food, much of it in food deserts and other low-income areas. This year's awards-- 149 in total, distributed across 42 states and the District of Columbia-- showed a rise in urban projects and increased diversity in the types of projects funded.

"Earlier this year, we reported that more than 1,000 new farmers markets have been recorded across the United States, totaling 7,175 markets," said Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan. "Through programs like FMPP, we believe that USDA's contributions to direct farm-to-consumer marketing are providing alternative economic opportunities for our nation's agricultural producers."

Traditionally, FMPP has funded projects in both rural and urban areas. However, this year saw a shift toward a more even distribution, with urban projects growing to nearly half of the portfolio. Increasing fresh food access in food deserts – low-income areas identified as having limited access to affordable and nutritious food – and other low-income communities was a priority for this year's awards. As a result, over 40 percent of projects funded by FMPP this year serve one or more food deserts and another 20 percent will be implemented in communities with a poverty rate of 20 percent or higher.

Additionally, improvements in transportation and delivery methods, purchase of refrigeration equipment and improvements to packaging and storage that facilitate food access comprise nearly a third of the projects funded. Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) projects continue to exceed the congressionally mandated 10 percent, accounting for approximately 24 percent of total funding which gives participants in federal nutrition assistance programs even greater access to nutritious food.

For a list of this year's projects go to [Latest USDA News Releases](#).

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For More Story Info: [Latest USDA News Releases](#)

For Radio Story: [ACTUALITY: Farmers Markets Get Direct Marketing Funding](#)

USDA REMINDS NATIVE AMERICAN FARMERS AND RANCHERS THAT THE KEEPSEAGLE SETTLEMENT CLAIMS FILING PERIOD IS OPEN THROUGH DECEMBER 27

Janie Hipp, Senior Adviser to Secretary Vilsack for Tribal Relations reminded Native American farmers and ranchers that the period to file a claim in the Keepseagle class action settlement remains open through December 27, 2011. "Native American farmers and ranchers who believe they are entitled to funds under the Keepseagle settlement must file a claim on or before December 27 in order to file a claim," said Ms. Hipp. "Tribal leaders should consider advising Tribal members of the requirement to obtain and submit a completed claims package if they wish to participate in the Keepseagle claims process. Claims meetings are still occurring and individuals can also call the toll-free number and get assistance with filing."

Keepseagle v. Vilsack was a lawsuit alleging that USDA discriminated against Native American farmers and ranchers in the way it operated its farm loan program. The lawsuit was settled late last year and the settlement has been approved by the court. The filing period opened June 29, 2011 and continues for 180 days. Up to \$760 million will be made available in monetary relief, debt relief, and tax relief to successful claimants. There are two tracks for claims: Successful Track A claimants may receive up to \$50,000; successful Track B claimants may receive up to \$250,000. The standard of proof for Track B claims is a higher standard than what will be applied to Track A claims.

Keepseagle class counsel is holding a number of meetings in the coming months throughout Indian Country and they will provide assistance to help Track A claimants fill out a claims package at those meetings. The dates and times of the meetings are posted on the Keepseagle claims website: <http://www.indianfarmclass.com>. Claimant services representatives can also be reached through calling 1-888-233-5506.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202)720-4623

For More Story Info: [Latest USDA News Releases](#)

For Radio Story: [REMINDER: Keepseagle Claims Period Is Coming To An End](#)

NEW USDA REPORT SHOWS CONSERVATION PRACTICES REDUCING SEDIMENT, NITROGEN AND PHOSPHORUS IN GREAT LAKES REGION

A new USDA study shows that farmers using combinations of erosion-control and nutrient-management practices on cultivated cropland are reducing losses of sediment, nitrogen and phosphorous from farm fields and decreasing the movement of these materials to the Great Lakes and their associated waterways.

"The Great Lakes Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) study confirms that good conservation planning and implementation have reduced loadings of sediment and nutrients to waterways throughout the region," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "The Administration appreciates the actions of every farmer who is stepping up to implement conservation practices, protect vital farmlands and strengthen local economies. At the same time, we also see opportunities for even further progress."

The CEAP study, prepared by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), estimates that the use of conservation tillage and other conservation practices has resulted in a 50 percent decline in sediment entering rivers and streams, along with 36 and 37 percent declines, respectively, in phosphorus and nitrogen loading.

This latest study, as with CEAP reports on the Upper Mississippi River Basin and the Chesapeake Bay watershed, identifies slightly more than half of cropland as having either a high or moderate need for additional conservation practices to lessen sediment and nutrient losses. The remainder of cropland has low needs for additional conservation – that is, low vulnerabilities to sediment and/or nutrient loss and having adequate conservation management to minimize losses.

The study covers nearly 174,000 square miles – the entire U.S. side of the Great Lakes Region – including nearly all of Michigan and parts of Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. It is based on data obtained through a survey of farming and conservation practices conducted by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service from 2003 to 2006. More than 1,400 National Resources Inventory sample points provide the statistical basis for estimating conditions throughout the region.

For the CEAP cropland studies, the NRCS works in partnership with USDA's Agricultural Research Service and Texas AgriLife Research and Extension of Texas A&M University. The interagency modeling team uses computer models to compare simulations of the existing conditions of natural resources in the study area to conditions that would be expected if conservation practices were not in use. The agency expects to have its series of CEAP watershed studies covering the 48 contiguous states online next year.

Read additional information about the [Great Lakes Conservation Effects Assessment Project study](#), including the full report.

Contact: Sylvia Rainford 202-720-2536

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For More Story Info: [Latest USDA News Releases](#)

For Radio Story: [USDA Releases Conservation Study Of Great Lakes Region](#)

[ACTUALITY: Four Lessons From Great Lakes Area Conservation Study](#)

(October 12)

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY TOM VILSACK COMMENTS ON CONGRESSIONAL PASSAGE OF KOREA, COLOMBIA AND PANAMA TRADE AGREEMENTS AND TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE

"We are pleased that both Houses of Congress acted swiftly to support tens-of-thousands of American jobs today by ratifying trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia and Panama, as well as trade adjustment assistance to help train workers for the 21st century economy. For American agriculture, passage of these agreements means over \$2.3 billion in additional exports, supporting nearly 20,000 jobs here at home. Passage of the agreements also levels the playing field and secures markets for America's farmers, ranchers, growers and producers. Immediately upon implementation of these agreements, the

majority of American products exported to Korea, Colombia and Panama will become duty-free. Swift action by Congress also helped us to maintain an advantage on competitors striking their own trade deals with these nations.

The trade agreements will also strengthen what has been a bright spot in the American economy. With record agricultural exports supporting more than a million jobs here at home, passage of these deals will contribute to a positive U.S. trade balance, create jobs, and provide new income opportunities for our nation's agricultural producers, small businesses, and rural communities."

Fact sheets on how all three trade agreements will benefit U.S. agriculture are available here: [Korea](#), [Colombia](#) and [Panama](#).

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

For More Story Info: [Latest USDA News Releases](#)

For Radio Story: [ACTUALITY: Vilsack on FTA Passage](#)
[The Big Double Debate On Free Trade Agreements](#)

AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS PROGRESS REPORT SHOWS CONSERVATION, RECREATION GAINS AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS

With the release of the 2011 America's Great Outdoors Progress Report, 15 federal agencies outlined their combined conservation and recreation successes, including gains in youth employment, new trail designations, the creation of urban campgrounds, and historic investments in large landscapes such as the Everglades.

In addition to social, cultural and historic value, America's outdoors provide vital jobs and economic benefits to communities across the country. For example, National Parks see more than 280 million visitors, generating \$12 billion in visitor spending and supporting nearly 250,000 jobs. The Outdoor Industry Association estimates recreation activities including hiking, camping, and fishing contribute \$730 billion to the U.S. economy, support more than 6 million jobs, and generate \$289 billion annually in retail sales and services.

"The quality and accessibility of our outdoor spaces have a significant impact on the economic and physical health of American communities," said Nancy Sutley, Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality. "Actions under the America's Great Outdoors initiative are reinvigorating a national discussion about the value of conservation, resulting in smart, innovative strategies and investments that respond to the priorities of American communities."

"Easy access to quality outdoor recreation areas is something that all Americans should enjoy – whether they are young or old, live in rural or urban areas, and no matter how take advantage of the natural world," said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. "Under the banner of America's Great Outdoors, President Obama has made it clear that conservation is a priority for this administration. We will continue to invest in land and water projects that have the backing of communities who depend on the job-creating power of the outdoor economy."

For examples how agencies are working together and with private sector, non-profit and community partners to leverage resources and deliver on-the-ground results for Americans go to [Latest USDA News Releases](#).

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For More Story Info: [Latest USDA News Releases](#)

(October 11)

USDA HIGHLIGHTS SCHOOL NUTRITION ADVANCES DURING NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH WEEK

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack highlighted positive changes in the school meals programs to promote children's health during National School Lunch Week, Oct. 10-14. USDA, along with its partners, celebrates the program's accomplishments, including the achievements of HealthierUS School Challenge honorees and the enactment of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. The theme of this year's National School Lunch Week is "School Lunch – Let's Grow Healthy" and places special emphasis on Farm to School efforts. The initiative connects schools with regional or local farms to serve healthy meals using locally produced foods.

"Historic reforms in USDA's school meals programs have helped strengthen the nutritional habits of millions of American children," said Vilsack. "USDA's commitment to improving the quality and standards of food in our schools, coupled with efforts to increase physical activity, will enable more children to lead healthier lifestyles and put them on a path to a brighter future."

Since President Obama signed the HHFKA into law last December, USDA has worked to implement the Act's reforms, including provisions to simplify program administration, expand access and improve nutrition in school meals. And over 1,500 schools across the country have made improvements as part of the Healthier US School Challenge, a key component of First Lady Michelle Obama's [Let's Move!](#) initiative to end childhood obesity within a generation. Participating schools voluntarily adopt USDA standards for food they serve at their schools, agree to provide nutrition education, and offer greater opportunities for physical activity.

USDA Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services Kevin Concannon said, "Farm to school activities not only inject fresh, locally-produced food into school meals programs, but also provide small farmers with new marketing opportunities and school children with the chance to learn about how food is produced and harvested for consumption."

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623
For More Story Info: [Latest USDA News Releases](#)

COMMENT PERIOD EXTENDED FOR ANIMAL DISEASE TRACEABILITY

You now have an additional thirty days to comment on a proposed rule for a National Animal Disease Traceability program.

For Radio Story: [Animal Disease Traceability Comment Period Extended](#)

For more agriculture news visit www.USDA.gov and click Newsroom on the toolbar.



[The Latest USDA Blog Posts](#)

World Food Prize related event for Fellows (**FAS**)
Secretary's Column
FFF Stories from the field (**CFBNP**)
World Vet Year (**APHIS**)
Report on the FFF Awards Ceremony at the Pentagon (**CFBNP**)
Chunky Sawdust Finds New Life (**RD**)
FMPP Grants Announcement (**AMS**)
Rebuilding America's Infrastructure (**OC**) – cross post from the White House blog

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

(Feature Line-Up Subject To Change Prior to Update On October 18)

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 42.11 – One of the key components of a new National Animal Disease Traceability program is a classic piece of animal identification. Rod Bain and Susan Carter looks at what this entails and how some are learning "ear tag 101" in this edition of "Agriculture USA".

CONSUMER TIME CD # 42.11 – Animal Identification Key To Food Safety. USDA Works To Keep Rural Americans Healthy. Taking Precautions To Prevent The Spread Of Lysteria. Why Peanut Butter And Other Peanut Products Are Costing More. Halloween Origins Masked In A Tangle Of Legend.

AG UPDATE CD # 42.11 – World Crop Production Is Record Setting. Free Trade Agreements Approved. Ear Tags And Their Role In Animal Disease Traceability. Draft EIS Comment Period Underway For GE Sugar Beets. Ag Impacts of Hurricane Irene On Vermont.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – October 18 – Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry Outlooks (ERS-WAOB); Crop Weather (WAOB). October 21 – Cattle On Feed Report (NASS) October 24 – Crop Progress Report (NASS). **These are USDA reports we know about in advance. The USDA Radio Newsline carries many stories every day that are not listed in this lineup.**

USDA Radio Newsline, 202-720-6776, 5:00pm ET

Or go to www.usda.gov, click on Newsroom at top of the page, scroll down on right side of page until you see Radio and TV. Then click on Daily Radio News Service or Weekly Radio Feature Service. For questions about USDA Radio's Features, fax name, station, and address to 202-690-2165.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

Finding the Best Fall Colors

The USDA Forest Service can help you find the best Fall colors

**A new TV feature is available on the USDA FTP site
Filename: Fall Color feature**

Download instructions:

The host: <ftp://ocbmtcmedia.download.akamai.com>
User name: usdanews
Password: Newscontent1

The new file is in QuickTime Movie (H.264), MPEG 4, MPEG2 and HDV
YouTube: [USDA on YouTube: FINDING THE BEST FALL COLORS](#)
Video Podcast: [USDA Video Podcast: FINDING THE BEST FALL COLORS](#)
RSS Feed: [USDA RSS Feed: FINDING THE BEST FALL COLORS](#)

Please email bob.ellison@usda.gov if you have problems or suggestions
Also, use this free ftp client if you have problems
<http://filezilla-project.org/download.php?type+client>

Food Price Increases To Slow Down

Food prices should go up next year, but not as much as this year

A new TV feature is available on the USDA FTP site
Filename: Fall and 2012 food

Download instructions:

The host: <ftp://ocbmtcmedia.download.akamai.com>
User name: usdanews
Password: Newscontent1

The new file is in QuickTime Movie (H.264), MPEG 4, MPEG2 and HDV
YouTube: [USDA on YouTube: FOOD PRICE INCREASES TO SLOW DOWN](#)
Video Podcast: [USDA Video Podcast: FOOD PRICE INCREASES TO SLOW DOWN](#)
RSS Feed: [USDA RSS Feed: FOOD PRICE INCREASES TO SLOW DOWN](#)

Please email bob.ellison@usda.gov if you have problems or suggestions
Also, use this free ftp client if you have problems
<http://filezilla-project.org/download.php?type+client>

OFF MIKE

FINALLY SOME MUCH WELCOME RAIN – That’s what **Tony Purcell** (Texas State Networks – Dallas, Texas [Texas State Networks](#)) and others in high heat and drought stricken areas are saying. The catch says **Purcell** it’s, “not enough to break the drought, but probably enough to get the Hard Red Winter Wheat crop planted. Almost everyone got some, although amounts varied. 1.1” at my place, but up to 8” in the panhandle. It is probably too little, too late for the cotton crop as that crop is already made and in various stages of harvest.” Despite the rain, the truth is the drought is not broken and pastures are still in poor condition. “Lake and reservoir levels are extremely low,” adds **Purcell**.



THE WEEKEND OF OCTOBER 8TH & 9TH OF 2011 WILL FOREVER BE REMEMBERED – It’s the time it rained again in Texas. But of course, **Curt Lancaster** (Texas Farm Bureau Media – Waco, Texas <http://www.txfb.org>) says some folks didn’t get any rain while others received anywhere from a half an inch to eight inches of rain. The rains fell over a sizeable chunk of Texas real estate. **Lancaster** adds, “It was not a drought breaker but it was a significant rain and probably the largest widespread rain in Texas in over a year. So there are smiles where there were frowns.”

HOOSIER AG TODAY LAUNCHES "APP" FOR AGRICULTURE – Gary Truitt (Hoosier Ag Today - Carmel, Indiana <http://www.hoosieragtoday.com>) informs us that Indiana farmers are going to spend a lot more time listening to their smartphones, getting information about the latest farm news, weather, and market analysis from Indiana's most trusted farm broadcasters. **Truitt** says, "This is in-depth information that is too long for today's commercial radio formats but the kind of detail that today's farmers crave." The free application provides farmers with up-to-the-minute market prices, time-sensitive news, and an exclusive Indiana agricultural weather forecast. But what makes the HAT app unique is that farmers can listen to exclusive audio content on their wireless devices. The HAT app is currently available on the Android platform with an iPhone version ready for release in a few weeks.

TIME FOR THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE FAIR – The festivities got underway Thursday and will go through Sunday October 23 at the State Fair Grounds in Raleigh. The North Carolina Department of Agriculture runs this 150+ year old fair, and last year saw over a million visitors! **Rhonda Garrison** (Southern Farm Network & SFNToday.com – Raleigh, North Carolina <http://www.sfntoday.com>) says fair goers will have a new exhibit this year to visit that will focus on agricultural careers.

DID YOU CATCH THE "FOOD DIALOGUES"? – **Max Armstrong** (WGN Radio – Chicago, Illinois <http://www.wgnradio.com>) helped to host the "town hall meeting" that was video streamed coast-to-coast by the U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance on September 22. "I was the ag media representative and moderated a panel based in Indiana, as we were connected with panels located in California, New York and Washington, D.C." Secretary Vilsack and former Secretary Glickman were among the participants.

***Broadcasters if you have any humanitarian or community service events
you'd like to share please forward to susan.carter@oc.usda.gov.
We love to hear about what you're doing and
share it with others in the farm broadcaster family.***

From all of us to all of you ... thank you for what you do



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